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## **Krinka Vidaković Petrov** *Acting Director Of The Staro Sajmište Memorial Centre In Belgrade*



By **Radmila Stanković**

*The new director of the Staro Sajmište [Old Fairgrounds] Memorial Centre is a professor, scientist and ambassador, whose special interests include Hispanic studies and Judaism. Her father was a respected Yugoslav diplomat, which is how she came to live in Cairo, Chicago and Havana, and it was also thanks to him that she got to meet Che Guevara. Her husband, who died recently, was prominent writer and professor Aleksandar Saša Petrov. Her ancestry encompasses various professions, but they were patriots above all. The life motto of this diligent and competent woman is that it isn't enough to only look to the future, because that future is unbearably easy and false if the past isn't incorporated into it.*

Her name is very rare and unusual, which is precisely what her mother wanted when choosing it for her daughter. The Krinon and the lily are the same flower, but Lily is a common girl's name, unlike Krinka. In her later years, she learned that the word krinon comes from the Greek language. However, whenever she spent time in the western parts of the former Yugoslavia, she would be asked her if it is her real name, because they

found it strange that someone could be given such an "ugly" name.

They didn't associate it with the Serbian or Greek name of the flower, but with the word krinku meaning "cover" or mask, from which the verb raskrinkati [unmask/uncover] is derived. So, it is a rare name that was interpreted differently in the former Serbo-Croatian language depending on regional dialect.

Krinka's father hailed from Užice and her mother was from Kragujevac. They met as secondary school pupils, and the love that lit them up back then lasted for the rest of their lives. Krinka and her brother were born in the first years after World War II, into the baby boomer generation. They grew up in a happy family and during a time when hopes for a better future overcame the traumas of the recent war. Although she was born in Belgrade, in the apartment where the family continued to live later, the earliest memories of CorD's interlocutor are linked to Chicago, where her father served as a diplomat:

"Those are not memories of a shining American metropolis, but of our family home and surroundings, nursery, my first school days, other kids from the neighbourhood. There were American children of various origins, which back then – at 4 or 5 years old – I didn't even notice. One ritual that was repeated in nursery ended up ingrained in my memory, and it was thanks to that ritual that I learned to differentiate between the left and right sides of the body. Every morning, the children would stand and turn towards the American flag in the corner of the room, place their right hand on their heart and recite something, which wasn't clear to me. But that's how I learnt to distinguish left from right. At home we spoke only Serbian, and that revealed something important in my childish consciousness: that we are all the same in that we have our heart is on the left side, but that we are different in many other ways. Young children either don't notice differences or overcome them easily. I didn't comprehend clearly at the time the fact that Serbian and English are two different languages, and we children understood each other, probably more with body language than

spoken language. But it was not easy for my brother, who's three years my senior, because he immediately started first grade of elementary school. He had to learn English quickly, but also to defend himself from those who perceived him as some "other".

*Various parameters of otherness – gender, social, political, cultural – increasingly manifested themselves later during my adolescence and maturing, and later in life. I've learnt that 'otherness' has two faces: it's a negative in the eyes of some, but in essence it can be a secret positive."*

Nevertheless, that feeling of being 'the other' also came to me later, and it accompanied me through life like a weird travel companion. Various parameters of otherness – gender, social, political, cultural – increasingly manifested themselves later during my adolescence and maturing, and later in life. I've learnt that 'otherness' has two faces: it's a negative in the eyes of some, but in essence it can be a secret positive."

She grew up in a loving and attentive environment, and her parents passed on different character traits to her during her upbringing. Her mother taught tenderness, creativity, sacrifice and beauty. She was a professor of French and Krinka followed in her footsteps as a student, discovering the charms of language, literature and culture. She was later led on that path by her husband, Aleksandar Petrov, who she says taught her to navigate literary waters and discover new landscapes not charted on maps:

"My father rarely said anything to me, which is why I remember the few simple pieces of advice he gave me, and which come from the treasure trove of traditional wisdom. First, that a person can gain a lot and lose even more – due to wars, natural disasters and various misfortunes, and we can never know if and when they'll hit us. He believed that the most valuable thing is what I carry in myself and what I carry on me like a snail carries its home – health, intelligence, knowledge, love, spiritual strength – which I need to strive to preserve in all circumstances, not only good ones, but also those fraught temptations. Secondly, he told me that a person must be able to be soft like cotton, but also solid like steel, and that he must be able to adequately endure situations in which he might find himself, symbolically speaking, the situation of a "stableboy", as well as a situation in which he may "reign supreme". In other words, one should resist the temptations of powerlessness, but also of power. And thirdly, that roots are important, because one doesn't live only in the present, but rather also as part of both the past and the future." Her value system was instilled in her early in her childhood through family stories told by her parents. She had two grandmothers, one in Užice

and the other in Kragujevac. Her father's mother, from Užice, came from the Tankosić family and was related to Voja Tankosić (1880-1915), a major in the Serbian army who died during the First World War. Krinka's great-grandfather, Veljko Tankosić, was a priest, but in accordance with the time in which he lived, he was also something of a hajduk, something of a politician, and always a patriot. When the Austrians attacked Serbia by crossing the Drina, he and several of his friends killed some Austrian soldiers. After that became known, her great-grandfather fled to Montenegro. However, after Montenegro capitulated to the Austrians, he was arrested and deported to the Jindřichovice POW camp in the Czech Republic. He was already an old man by then, exhausted and ill, but the Austrians transported him back to Užice nonetheless, just to lead him tied up through the city and hang him publicly at Užice's Dovarje cemetery. And they published a photograph in the newspaper: "My grandmother, then a girl, had been present for that horrible deed. She later kept that photo on the wall of her room in Užice for the rest of her life, where we, her grandchildren, observed it, not understanding the horror it represented. But we later learnt a lot from the story of our great-grandfather Veljko Tankosić.



"I grew up in various social surroundings (in Chicago, Cairo, Havana), but those were always places limited by time and essential transience. Our family home represented that which was constant. We were returned 'home' to Belgrade and in Belgrade we were 'living at home'." Krinka's father, Boško Vidaković, was Yugoslav ambassador to Cuba from 1961-1964, and her memories from that country are a special story: "Cuba was something fantastic and unforgettable. We arrived there soon after the failed Bay of Pigs invasion. For the first few months, my brother and I studied Spanish at the only private school then operating in the country. All educational institutions – from primary to university – were closed because it was the "Year of Alphabetisation", when all teachers and professors headed to the most remote villages to

bring literacy to the people. The schools later started working again and I attended a high school that worked according to a new, Soviet programme.

*Roots are important, because one doesn't live only in the present, but rather also as part of both the past and the future*

For the few foreign students, the school organised Spanish language classes every day after regular classes ended. Among us few were one American and several Russians, the children of experts sent by the Soviets as technical assistance to Cuba. Among my best friends, besides the Cubans who I recall fondly, was a Yugoslav girl (who soon returned to Belgrade with her parents and later became a famous painter) and a Dolores, whose father had fled Spain as a child after the Civil War, become an engineer in Moscow and married a Russian woman, and later moved to Havana with his family.

That was the second year after the revolution, then the time of the most dangerous crisis of the Cold War – the Cuban Missile Crisis. The majority of embassy staff members and their families were evacuated due to the nuclear threat, but my mother decided that we should all stay together, and what will be will be. My father played an important role for Yugoslavia during that crisis, but that's another story. For this story, it's interesting to note that he'd already met Guevara back in Cairo, when Che was visiting "friendly" countries for the (secret) procurement of arms. No one yet knew who Che Guevara was at that time, and during his visit to Egypt no one took much interest in him, except my father, who realised that he was a very interesting character who represented a new, revolutionary, but not yet quite clearly and publicly determined, government in Cuba. My father had very interesting conversations in Cairo with Che, and suggested that Yugoslavia be included among the 'friendly' countries of his tour. That's how Che Guevara arrived in Belgrade, although that wasn't originally planned. Thanks to all that, my father already had an established relationship with Guevara upon arrival in Havana, and he came to our house to talk with him. That's also how I had the opportunity to meet him – from my high school girl's perspective.

I remembered the Cuban crisis while I was serving in Israel, when the country was in a formal a state of war due to the invasion of Iraq (2003). Back then all the responsibility had been on my father, but now it was on me. It was certainly much, much more difficult for him, and knowing that helped me, together with my excellent team at the embassy, to overcome all the challenges we faced."



*KRINKA'S PARENTS (LEFT) WITH FRIENDS IN HAVANA (RIGHT)*

Krinka's pre-university education including school in Chicago (in English), then one year in Belgrade, then in Cairo at an American school, then again one year in Belgrade, then high school in Havana (in Spanish). That required a little more effort than it would have had she only attended schools in Belgrade, not only because of the different languages, but also because of different curricula:

"The most interesting was the high school in Havana, because I was learning in Spanish, but according to the Soviet school curriculum, albeit modified with 'additions' specific to the Cuban revolution. In Havana we also had one compulsory subject called the Plenum, which consisted of pupils discussing a wide range of topics – from whether there's a God to the exporting of the revolution to Latin America.

*Saša and I were happy people, we traversed lovers' lanes together, followed creative visions together, discovered new worlds, shared a desire to discover something new, to take the harder but more gratifying routes*

"I was a good pupil, but nothing exceptional. In primary school I'd been fascinated by astronomy. And although I found the natural sciences easier in high school, it was then that I became interested in philosophy and revolution (so I wouldn't have to be in Cuba!) and that opened up a whole new world to me. But I still wasn't sure what I wanted to study by the time I finished high school, other than I knew it wouldn't be medicine or dentistry."

She completed English language and literature and Spanish language studies in Belgrade, and earned her doctorate from the Faculty of Philosophy in Zagreb with an interesting dissertation entitled 'Oral Tradition and the Written Word of Sephardim in Yugoslavia'. And what motivated her to opt for this topic?



WITH HUSBAND SAŠA

“I enrolled in postgraduate studies at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade in 1969. The very next year, I took a job as an intern at the Institute of Literature and Art. My project manager at the Institute was an exceptional man: Dr Zarko Vidović. He always spoke about interesting things and told me, among other things, about his life in Sarajevo before the war, his imprisonment in Jasenovac and subsequent torment at a camp in Norway. But woven into these stories were his friends who were Spanish Jews (Sephardi) from pre-war Sarajevo and later Jasenovac. I found this topic fascinating, especially when my friend and colleague at the Institute, Dr Simha Kabiljo Šutić, who is of Sephardic origin, told me even more about all of that. Their stories motivated me to register to do my doctoral dissertation on Sephardic culture. It seemed to me that it was a small diamond hidden in the dirt and that my mission would be to extract and study it. And That’s how it was. The diamond shone, but only after ten years of arduous work. Of course, I wanted to register the same topic at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, but the then Spanish department had no time for me or my topic. The only alternative was to go to Zagreb and apply for a doctorate there. And so, I headed to Zagreb, for the first time in my life, not knowing anyone, to register this topic with Professor August Kovačec. The second time I went to Zagreb was to defend my doctoral thesis. When Sarajevo-based publisher Svjetlost published my book in 1986, it introduced the Jewish topic to our public in a big way. The book had three editions in Yugoslavia and one in Paris, in French. I’m particularly pleased that, twenty years later, this study inspired and encouraged a young generation of Hispanic studies colleagues to deal with Sephardim.”

Hispanic studies and Judaism are two important areas of Krinka’s scientific and translation work. The place of the Spanish and Jewish cultures in Serbia is a special topic that has no place in this story, just like the topic of why there is no department of Jewish studies in Belgrade. She says that this is an issue for the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade. She doesn’t know the answer, but she recently read that a

department for Jewish studies has opened at the faculty in Kragujevac.



Krinka was married to recently deceased writer and scientist Aleksandar Petrov for many years. “Saša and I were happy people, we traversed lovers’ lanes together, followed creative visions together, discovered new worlds, but I must say that Saša taught me a lot when I started dealing with scientific work and literary translations. He was my best professor. We later supported each other in everything – life, work, creativity. We shared a desire to discover something new, to walk untrodden paths, to take the harder but more gratifying routes, which required more courage, strength, effort. And we didn’t regret that. Saša’s Dr Haos [Dr Chaos] book of stories and poetry book Erosova sveska [Eros’s Notebook] (which was released simultaneously in Belgrade in Serbian and in Moscow in Russian) have just been published. His new study on erotica in Serbian and world literature, will be published soon by Andrićgrad. For me, Saša was, and will remain, a reliable guiding star and my true spiritual home, as he wrote in one poem: “I choose a house according to the windows. / Branches to strike the glass at dawn, / shaft opening, / the scent of morning to wake me. And at night through the windows / for the stars to descend to my eyes / when I raise my eyes to the sky / and seek my mother among the stars”

*In Havana we also had one compulsory subject called the Plenum, which consisted of pupils discussing a wide range of topics – from whether there’s a God to the exporting of the revolution to Latin America*

This diligent and capable woman was the ambassador of the then FR Yugoslavia, i.e., Serbia and Montenegro, to Israel from 2001 to 2006. And if she were to write her memoirs about that period, what would she write about as being the most difficult thing for a female diplomat in such a specific country as Israel?

“Israel isn’t a place where diplomatic service is easy or routine, but it is a challenging place that provides greater opportunities to express yourself professionally. I’d been to Israel before that, but

exclusively for research purposes and international conferences. When I arrived as an ambassador, terrorism was in full swing. That is generally a country where things are never entirely peaceful, where it is occasionally very turbulent, where security is an issue raised to such a level of intensity that isn't seen in many other countries. During the time of the invasion of Iraq it was in a state of war. That was the hardest thing professionally. In the middle of this situation, I was with a fellow ambassador having a very serious discussion about what to do, and my mobile phone rang as we were leaving the restaurant. The ambassador impatiently asked me if I'd received news about the invasion of Iraq, because he – like all of my colleagues – was obsessed with this issue. And I answered him with a smile and confirmation that I hadn't, but that my friend asked me about a recipe. We laughed heartily.



*PRESENTING HER CREDENTIALS IN JERUSALEM*

That couldn't happen to a male ambassador, who can only address one issue, while women are accustomed to working on multiple fronts at all times and viewing things from multiple perspectives. The most ordinary recipe reminds you of a reality that's more complicated than politics. But Israel is much more than that. It is an extremely interesting country. Jerusalem is a place that's home to the main holy sites of three world religions, but also a place of constant conflicts, a place where you walk through the past on cobblestone streets, and when you raise your gaze, you'll see the future of new technologies. There human destinies move in the broad range of these complex coordinates. Although I'd been acquainted with Israel from before, that diplomatic experience – right there and right at that time – enriched me with new experiences. I returned from Israel to Belgrade much richer in spiritual terms, and I'd made a lot of friends there.

Krinka was appointment acting director of the Staro Sajmište Memorial Centre in Belgrade at

the beginning of November. This appointment also serves to prove that the state is determined, after adopting the Law on this memorial centre, to finally also resolve its destiny. What is the significance of this memorial centre and its future?

“This appointment was a surprise for me, but primarily a great honour, as well as a great challenge. I consider it good that the hour has finally come to move from words to deeds and to start implementing this project, which is of key importance to the culture of remembrance in Serbia, as well as to the city of Belgrade, at the heart of which this centre is located. The first step was the adoption of the Law on the Staro sajmište Memorial Centre. The road ahead of me is a long one, filled with problems of various kinds, but every step we take will be a significant step forward. I intentionally say “we” because this is a project that cannot advance without cooperation among various interested participants, and above all the founder of this cultural institution, the Republic of Serbia. I believe this will be the case if we all clearly recognise the priorities of each stage of work and always keep in mind that joint action unfolds over the long run, and that we must be persistent and enduring. This project is extremely important because it will enable ours and subsequent generations of Serbs, Jews, Roma and all others to comprehend that the horrors that symbolically and historically represent the site of the “Old Fairground” were real and even more horrific than we can imagine today. It isn't enough to only look to the future, because that future is unbearably easy and false if the past isn't incorporated into it. Memorial centres on the sites of former concentration camps already exist in many other countries. And as far as we're concerned, that isn't just about repaying a debt to the victims, but making a fundamental contribution to our future.”

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# Defensible Borders for Israel

## What Does It Mean?



### *Preserving Israel's Doctrine of Defensible Borders*

By Yossi Kuperwasser

Israel's security concerns justify its demand for defensible borders, which are the military manifestation of the reference in UN Security Council Resolution 242 to the right of Israel, as any other country, to "secure and recognized boundaries."

As detailed in this comprehensive analysis, from a national security and military point of view, defensible borders are those that allow Israel to effectively defend itself by itself – to deter, thwart, prevent the development, and supply timely early warning against all potential military threats involving all possible dimensions. These include:

- The territorial dimension – threats from distant areas and those adjacent to Israel as well as from inside the territory Israel controls.
- The time dimension – threats that currently exist as well as those foreseen in the medium and long term.
- The military dimension – conventional and unconventional threats, terror threats of various kinds, ground operations, underground threats, aerial activity of different kinds, including planes, UAVs, drones, ballistic and cruise missiles, naval and other threats.
- Additional threats involving the cyber arena, water, and communications security.

Defensible borders do not necessarily mean that all threats can best be treated from the same line, but that all resources necessary to achieve Israel's defense requirements are within its borders. From this point of view, it is clear that the concept does

not deal just with a certain outer perimeter but with the characteristics of the territory under Israel's direct and indirect control. It has to take into account the specific topography, demography, history and political situation.

Israel has a very narrow width and a small population compared with that of its current and potential adversaries. It lacks strategic depth and its armed forces have to rely on reservists to be able to perform its mission, especially in time of war. Its most densely populated areas are very close to territories populated by people who have been exposed to ongoing hate indoctrination against it. The topography along the center of the country includes a mountain ridge that overlooks and dominates the coastal plain in the west and the very deep Jordan Valley in the east. The regimes and countries around Israel suffer from inherent instability and some of them are failed states. Some of Israel's enemies are determined to wipe it off the map. Moreover, some of these enemies, especially Iran, have vast resources and are able to acquire advanced weaponry either through arms purchases from leading arms producers or through local production. All of these components have to be taken into account while drawing Israel's defensible borders.

It is true, of course, that Israel has impressive military capabilities, but if they are not deployed in the right locations, their effectiveness may be significantly compromised. For example, Israel's military deployment has to enable it to thwart attempts to bring in weapons (including rockets and drones) and trained terrorists or foreign military forces to the Palestinian-controlled areas of the West Bank from across the Jordan River.

This mission cannot be accomplished without Israel being able to deploy its forces in areas close to the river and on the eastern slopes of the mountain ridge dominating the Jordan River valley for purposes of observation and intelligence gathering that are necessary for permanent early warning and to thwart such attempts before they cause any damage. This will allow Israel to distance its population centers and critical infrastructure from these possible threats. In addition to "boots on the ground," Israel will require full control over the airspace above the entire territory of the West Bank as well as control of the electromagnetic spectrum to guarantee that it is able to deal effectively with any threat.

This does not mean that this deployment can hermetically prevent any infiltration of the border, but it should guarantee that any attempt to cross into the territory from the east, even if it is part of multi-front hostile activities, is met by sufficient power in time to prevent any

considerable damage to the security of Israel and its population, even if the early warning is not perfect. Moreover, Israeli military presence has a strategically important effect on deterrence and stabilization beyond the eastern border.

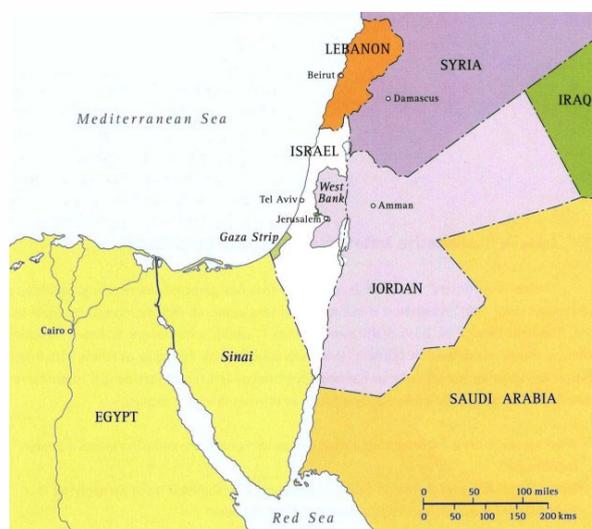
There have been various suggestions and creative ideas raised to establish a border along the 1967 lines with some local changes and to replace Israel's military presence in some of the critical areas with foreign forces or to rely on electronic detection devices alone. However, this cannot provide Israel with adequate defense. Israeli forces have to be present on the ground to take immediate action against imminent threats. Israel cannot rely on foreign forces, and detection devices can at best give some early warning or signal in real time that the border has been penetrated, but these devices cannot do much about it. The idea that Israeli intelligence collection assets will be deployed in strategically important locations but access to these locations will be through Palestinian-controlled areas, is simply not feasible.

The same is true when it comes to preventing terror and other military threats from within the territory controlled by the Palestinians. If Israel deploys its forces more or less along the '67 lines, it is not going to be able to protect its main cities and infrastructure and collect the information necessary for that purpose. Moreover, it is not going to be able to prevent significant deliveries of arms to the Palestinian-controlled territories or the local production of various weapons inside these territories.

The argument that Israel's armed forces are much stronger than the Palestinians and therefore it can afford to move to less defensible borders in the context of a peace agreement – and if this agreement is violated by the Palestinians Israel can recapture the territory – is baseless too. First of all, under such conditions, the Palestinians will be able to accumulate a considerable number of arms and military capabilities before they trigger hostilities, and once they do, recapturing the territory is going to be very costly in terms of casualties, not only to Israeli troops but also to the Israeli civilian population and critical infrastructure. Fighting a hybrid force that has both terror and conventional (and perhaps unconventional) capabilities that is fighting behind human shields is a huge challenge for every modern army. As long as many Palestinians continue to support the plan of fighting Israel in phases over time and regard the complete defeat of Zionism as their ultimate goal, any such moves that enable this are extremely irresponsible. The case of Gaza is an illuminating precedent, as are Afghanistan, Vietnam, Lebanon, Sinai, Somalia, and other arenas.

To sum up, the only border that may be regarded as defensible for the central region of the State of Israel is the Jordan Valley, with Israel maintaining military control of the eastern slopes of Judea and Samaria mountain ridge and of the main roads leading from west to east to enable free movement of Israel's armed forces to the border area. This should go along with Israeli control of the airspace and the electromagnetic spectrum. The Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff in 1967, General Earle Wheeler, clarified that to have defensible borders, Israel's boundary must be along the commanding terrain overlooking the Jordan Valley.

### **Israel within the 1949 Armistice Lines These were the boundaries at the outbreak of the 1967 Six-Day War.**



## **Defensible Borders for Israel: An Updated Response to Advocates and Skeptics**

**By Dore Gold**

Despite the intense efforts undertaken in Western capitals over the last six decades to second-guess Israel's security requirements in any resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict, the top leadership of the State of Israel has been remarkably consistent about what the state requires to protect its vulnerable borders in a perpetually unstable Middle East. Ever since the 1967 Six-Day War, the architects of Israel's national security have insisted that the territorial dimension of that resolution be predicated upon its retaining "defensible borders" for assuring a stable peace. This principle applied especially to the West

Bank, known as Judea and Samaria, but to the Golan Heights as well.



*Tanks from the IDF's 188th Brigade train on the Golan Heights in March 2021. Conventional forces play a crucial role in countering terror and other current threats. (Photo: IDF)*

The idea was that since Israel faced a gross asymmetry with its neighbors in the number of combat-ready standing forces it could deploy, in the hostile intent the regimes around it regularly voiced, and in the strategic depth it could rely upon if it came under attack, these states might well exploit their advantage in times of tension and strike Israel before it could mobilize its reserves. To make matters worse, Israel's adversaries sought to operate in multi-state coalitions, while Israel did not have that option, making the asymmetry between them even more acute.

Take, for example, the fact that in October 1973, Israel deployed a force of around 177 tanks on the Golan Heights while Syria had a standing force at the time of 1,400 tanks stretching from the border area back to Damascus. That gave Syria an eight-to-one advantage in armor alone. That would have been an intolerable force ratio for NATO in Central Europe, but it was a reality that Israel had to live with. The terrain of the Golan Heights became a hard factor that Israel relied upon in neutralizing Syria's numerical superiority.

### **When the International Community Addressed Israel's Security Concerns: Resolution 242**

In strategic discussions with their American counterparts, senior Israeli officers added that the neighboring states threatening them could also disperse military assets, like their air bases, across their vast territories, thereby reducing their vulnerability, while Israel did not have that option, giving its adversaries a built-in advantage should they decide to strike first. After the Six-Day War, the international community recognized the need to address Israeli concerns

through UN Security Council Resolution 242 from November 1967, which was adopted unanimously and served as the foundation of all Arab-Israeli peace treaties.

That resolution never called on Israel to withdraw from *all* the territory it captured in that conflict, but rather "from territories." The language that was finally adopted was not the result of a typo but rather intense diplomatic contacts between the Permanent Members of the Security Council, which were held at the highest levels in Washington, Moscow, and London. At the end of the day, according to the resolution, Israel was to end up with "secure and recognized boundaries" which were not the same as the pre-war lines from which it was attacked in 1967.

Those pre-war lines, in any case, were only armistice lines – not final political boundaries. There was a provision about the "inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war," but it was part of the resolution's preamble rather than a part of its binding operative language. A new international border plainly had to be drawn. Former frontiers needed to be adjusted. In fact, the British ambassador to the UN in 1967, Lord Caradon, admitted on *PBS*: "We did not say there should be a withdrawal to the '67 line." In the view of Israel's foreign minister, Abba Eban, the language of Resolution 242 thus left open the possibility of "territorial revision." Indeed, such revisions had been a part of postwar diplomacy after many previous conflicts, like the Second World War.

Resolution 242 was incorporated into every subsequent peace treaty between Israel and its neighbors. It was put into the invitation to the 1991 Madrid Peace Conference drafted by Russia and the United States, its co-sponsors. And one of the principles that constantly appeared in past American statements on the Middle East was that Israel was entitled to obtain "defensible borders," which reflected Resolution 242 and repeated presidential letters to Israeli leaders.

### **The Principle of Defensible Borders**

In the immediate aftermath of the Six-Day War, U.S. Secretary of Defense Robert McNamara asked the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff (JCS), Gen. Earle Wheeler, what was the "minimum territory" that Israel "might be justified in retaining in order to permit a more effective defense?" Wheeler responded with a memorandum on June 29, 1967, which concluded: "From a strictly military point of view, Israel would require the retention of some captured Arab territory in order to provide militarily defensible borders." Specifically with regard to the West Bank, the JCS suggested "a boundary along the commanding terrain overlooking the Jordan River," and considered taking this defense line "up to the crest of the mountain ridge."<sup>1</sup>

*“From a strictly military point of view, Israel would require the retention of some captured Arab territory in order to provide militarily defensible borders.”*

*– Gen. Earle Wheeler, former Chairman of the U.S. Joint Chiefs of Staff*

Yet the idea that Israel needed specifically “defensible” borders has always had its skeptics abroad. They frequently focused on different issues. Writing in *Foreign Affairs* in April 1976, Col. Merrill A. McPeak noted: “Israel, as Mrs. [Golda] Meir put it, is entitled to defensible borders.” But then he rhetorically asks: “where might such borders be drawn?” – implying that the pre-war lines were adequate. Indeed, his central proposal for resolving the conflict was a formula of “total return” of the territories Israel captured in 1967 in exchange for “total demilitarization.” McPeak would become Chief of Staff of the U.S. Air Force, although it was not clear that his positions on Israeli borders were dictated by his being an airpower enthusiast who belittled the needs of ground units at the time.



*U.S. Secretary of State Henry Kissinger (right) and Israeli Foreign Minister Yigal Allon (left), March 9, 1975 (Moshe Milner, GPO)*

At roughly the same time, Foreign Minister Yigal Allon, the legendary former commander of the pre-state Palmach, insisted in a conversation with U.S. Secretary of State Cyrus Vance: “Modern weapons make topography and geography indispensable elements in any settlement.” Allon served as foreign minister in Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin’s first government in the 1970s. He also happened to be Rabin’s mentor as well as his commanding officer during Israel’s War of Independence. Allon also wrote in *Foreign Affairs* six months after McPeak in an article entitled, “Israel: The Case for Defensible Borders.” Allon’s thinking undoubtedly influenced Rabin’s approach to peacemaking, as was evident in his final Knesset address, delivered in October 1995, where he stated: “The borders of the State of Israel, during the

permanent solution, will be beyond the lines which existed before the Six-Day War. We will not return to the 4 June 1967 line.”<sup>2</sup>

Rabin clearly did not believe that peace alone could guarantee the security of Israel. He felt the necessity of reiterating this point about the problematic nature of the 1967 line, two years *after* the 1993 Oslo Accords had been signed by his government and even following the completion of the 1994 Israel-Jordan Treaty of Peace. That legacy also appeared in Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s address at Bar-Ilan University in June 2009, when he said that as part of a final peace settlement, “Israel needs defensible borders and Jerusalem, the capital of Israel, must remain undivided with continued religious freedom for all faiths.”<sup>3</sup>

Netanyahu’s approach was seconded by his minister of defense, Moshe Ya’alon, at roughly the same time. Ya’alon had also served as Chief of Staff of the Israel Defense Forces and as the head of Israeli Military Intelligence. He was a powerful political ally. In 2006, he spoke at the Washington Institute for Near East Policy, advocating the Israeli point of view in a public address entitled, “Defensible Borders for Israel.” While there was a subsequent political rift between Netanyahu and Ya’alon, it did not involve their views on this matter.

In the meantime, the U.S. moved to adopt the language of defensible borders more explicitly than ever. On June 14, 2004, President George W. Bush sent a letter to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon which stated: “The United States reiterates its steadfast commitment to Israel’s security, including secure and defensible borders to preserve and strengthen Israel’s capability to deter and defend itself, by itself, against any threat or possible combination of threats.” Within a little over a week, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate adopted resolutions supporting the Bush letter and the principles it contained, including Israel’s right to defensible borders. This action was backed by overwhelming bi-partisan support in both houses of Congress. In retrospect, two signatories to this 2004 initiative on the Senate side stand out: Senator Hillary Clinton and Senator Joseph Biden.<sup>4</sup>

Yet a new generation of security experts has arisen in the West with their own critique of Israel’s rights and requirements for defensible borders. This calls for Israelis to articulate their considerations clearly in drawing the lines of any compromise with the Palestinians and along its military fronts with its neighbors. Political figures in the Obama administration often took a position on the issue of Israel’s borders in addition to officials in the Pentagon. Thus, Ben Rhodes, who served as Deputy National Security Advisor to President Obama, would write that the primary threat to Israel had now changed: “Invading Arab

armies were replaced by occasional acts of terror.”<sup>5</sup> This assessment bears directly on Israel’s security needs, and implies that the threats had declined considerably.

### Changing American Approaches

One of the considerations raised when a new administration comes into office in Washington is whether the older terms of reference for diplomacy were somehow outdated and should be replaced with more updated policies.

It is legitimate to raise the question of whether changes in the Middle East have potentially altered what Israel’s considerations in its approach to peacemaking ought to be. However, as will be seen, the fundamentals of Israel’s strategic situation remain unchanged, especially its need for defensible borders. True, regimes in the Middle East may change, but the mountain ridge in the West Bank remains a constant in Israeli considerations.

Frequently, new ideas are put forward and tested first by think tanks and research institutes, which have become part of the landscape of the U.S. decision-making community. How has the evolution of the U.S. approach to Israeli security expressed itself?



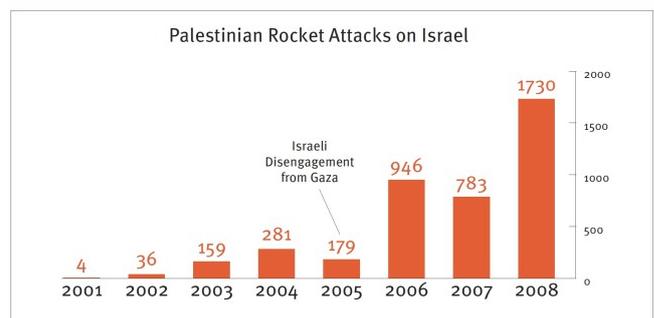
Former U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry and former Israeli Defense Minister Moshe Ya’alon, January 2014 (Photo: U.S. Embassy in Tel Aviv)

For example, *The Center for a New American Security* (CNAS) issued a report in May 2016 entitled, “A Security System for the Two-State Solution,” suggesting elaborate security arrangements that even included the deployment of American forces. The report acknowledges that “the most notable threat would be an attempt by ISIS or other extremist groups to infiltrate Jordan and attempt to destabilize the kingdom from within.” It does not rule out a future scenario entailing “an Iraqi invasion of Jordan and a march westward [i.e., toward Israel].” But how are these challenges addressed? The report does not mention assuring Israel’s defensible borders. It relies mostly on high technology and the incorporation of Arab state security organizations. The CNAS report was significant because it contains many of the main

points proposed in the security plan authored by General John Allen that became known as the Allen Plan. There was a subsequent CNAS report in December 2020, which also refrained from recognizing Israel’s need for defensible borders.<sup>6</sup> However, Israelis recall the violence that accompanied the IDF pullouts from Southern Lebanon (2000) and the Gaza Strip (2005). The Allen Plan proposals provided insufficient security to Israel’s population.

What about the arguments in the U.S. that Israel could fall back on advanced Western technology as a substitute for defensible terrain? Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Yanai headed the Planning Branch of the IDF as well as the IDF’s Ground Corps Command. He led the security talks for Israeli negotiating teams facing the Palestinians in the late 1990s. Yanai wrote on Israel’s “Core Security Requirements” in a study published in 2005. Presumably he was cognizant of the effort to convince Israelis that there were high tech alternatives to their security positions in the West Bank when he wrote: “despite the technological advances of modern defense systems and warfare, controlling the high ground remains an essential part of basic security doctrine.”<sup>7</sup>

The CNAS report was reminiscent of the Brookings Report in 1977 that shaped the policy of the recently- elected Carter administration at the time. It succeeded in erasing the legacy of the previous administration of Gerald Ford and his secretary of state, Henry Kissinger. Brookings also brought new officials into top policy-making positions. It is noteworthy that Hady Amr, who drafted the State Department document for “resetting” U.S. relations with the Palestinians in the Biden administration, served as a scholar for both the Brookings Institution and at CNAS. In short, CNAS had access to the new administration.



### Territorial Withdrawals and Resulting Rocket Attacks

A constant feature of what the CNAS report admits were a series of “failed withdrawals” was the smuggling of vast amounts of weaponry into these territories after Israel left. This produced a radical escalation of the scale of threat Israel faced. Just looking at Palestinian rocket attacks against Israel from the Gaza Strip, in 2005 a total of 179 rockets hit Israeli territory. The following

year that number mushroomed to 946, more than a 500 percent increase.

During a week-long period from November 14-21, 2012, the number of rockets launched at Israel reached 1,506. Major cities in the interior of Israel were hit for the first time. That experience made clear that in any new territorial arrangement, it was imperative for Israel to hold on to the outer perimeter of any disputed territory. In the Gaza Strip, that outer perimeter was called the Philadelphi Route. In the West Bank, it was known as the Jordan Rift Valley. This has been ingrained in generations of Israeli ground troops.

### **The Jordan Valley and the West Bank Mountain Ridge**

The Jordan Valley is not just the water bed where the Jordan River is located. It includes the steep slopes of the West Bank mountain ridge facing the Jordan River. Taking into account the fact that the Jordan River is adjacent to the lowest point on Earth – roughly 1,300 feet below sea level – and the mountain ridge reaches a maximal height of 3,300 feet above sea level, the Jordan Valley really constitutes a strategic barrier reaching more than 4,600 feet in some places.

### **Israel's Defense Line: The Jordan Rift Valley with the Steep Eastern Slopes of the West Bank Mountain Ridge**



There are five predictable axes of movement that a force would have to use to cross this mountainous territory. A relatively small Israeli Army could exploit that terrain to defend the state from a conventional attack or in the event it faced an insurgency campaign. The West Bank mountain ridge contains some of Israel's most important early-warning stations, like Baal Hatzor, making it part of Israel's air defense line. For this reason, Rabin spoke about Israel retaining the Jordan Valley "in the *widest* sense

of that term," in his memorable address to the Knesset in October 1995.



*Uzi Narkiss (left), Moshe Dayan and Yitzhak Rabin (right) enter the Old City of Jerusalem, 1967 (Ilan Broner/GPO)*

Looking at this topographical reality, Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Yanai succinctly wrote a decade later: "In modern warfare, such a dominating ridge has the utmost importance as a site for surveillance and air-space control systems. There is no real technological substitute for physical elevation. Technological solutions such as satellites, balloons, and aircraft can provide only a partial substitute to elevation. Thus, despite the technological advances of modern defense systems and warfare, controlling the high ground remains an essential part of basic security doctrine."<sup>8</sup> Israel's approach to these mountainous positions was undoubtedly influenced by the fact that a modern jet fighter could cross from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean in three to four minutes.

### **Evolving Conventional Threats**

In the past, Israel had a remarkably consistent threat from the east. Jordan by itself was not the focus of Israeli security concerns, yet it could be exploited as a platform of attack by a neighboring aggressor. In multiple Arab-Israeli wars, for example, Iraq dispatched one third of its ground order of battle, with armor and artillery. In 1948 and in 1967, an Iraqi expeditionary force crossed Jordan, using the West Bank as a point of entry to engage Israeli forces. The amount of time an Iraqi force would need to cross the Hashemite Kingdom was roughly the same as the amount of time Israel needed to complete its reserve mobilization.

*“Despite the technological advances of modern defense systems and warfare, controlling the high ground remains an essential part of basic security doctrine.”*

*– IDF Maj.-Gen. (ret.) Shlomo Yanai*

In 1973, Iraq was again involved, but its expeditionary force crossed through Syria and fought the IDF. By 1991, Iraq demonstrated a new form of engagement; it fired extended-range Scud missiles into Israel. But that did not eliminate Israel’s concern about the threat of a coalition of hostile ground forces and did not make Israel’s calculations about borders irrelevant. The key factor that Israel had to keep in mind, according to Allon, who saw these arguments growing in the 1970s, was how to win a war that had been inflicted on Israel. He argued that the German air “blitz” did not knock the British out of the Second World War. Equally, the massive bombardment of North Vietnam did not assure a U.S. victory in the Vietnam War. Thus, Allon reminds his readers that only an attack by ground forces can lead to a decisive outcome. And that is precisely what defensible borders deny Israel’s adversaries.



*Lt.-Gen. Gadi Eisenkot prepared the 2015 IDF Strategy Document.*

In his 2015 IDF Strategy Document, Israel’s former Chief of Staff, Lt.-Gen. Gadi Eisenkot, raised a new consideration: the need to deny Israel’s enemies from making “territorial gains” in its border regions as a result of ground incursions. He does not detail the scenario he has in mind, but it is known that Hizbullah had an operational plan back in 2008 to employ its “Redwan” special forces to take control of Israeli communities along the Lebanese border. Clearly, a land grab by a terrorist organization like Hizbullah in the north or Hamas in the south would constitute an enormous victory and a boost to the morale of these organizations. Defensible borders would be instrumental in helping Israel avert such a scenario in the future.<sup>9</sup>

With the defeat of Saddam Hussein in both Gulf Wars, the old scenarios of Iraqi intervention became less likely. But should the doctrine of defensible borders now be dropped by Israel? Absolutely not. The sources of hostile forces attacking Israel through Jordan may change. Should Iran take over a fractured Iraq, a whole new scenario may emerge in which Iran becomes directly involved in future Arab-Israeli ground wars. King Abdullah warned in 2004 about a “Shiite Crescent” forming from Iran through Iraq and Syria to the Mediterranean. The presence of pro-Iranian forces in southern Syria alone, although constituting a problem mainly for Israel’s north, has been a source of concern for the Jordanian regime.<sup>10</sup>

### **Pro-Iranian Shiite Militias: The Next Threat?**

Iran has brought Shiite forces into Syria from neighboring countries; one example is Lebanese Hizbullah. But they have also looked eastward and recruited forces like Liwa Fatemiyoun from Afghanistan, where an estimated 4.6 million Shiites constitute 15 percent of the Afghani population. There is another force known as the Zainabiyoun that comes from Pakistan, where there are 38 million Shiites, 20 percent of the Pakistani population. Shiite insurgents from Iraq and Yemen have also entered Syria in recent years.

The late commander of the Iranian Quds Force, Gen. Qassam Soleimani, often spoke about establishing what one analyst called a “Shiite foreign legion” that would serve as an Iranian expeditionary force and could reach 150,000 men. In 2014, Iran’s Supreme Leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei, proclaimed that there was an Iranian goal to encircle Israel, including the arming of the Palestinians in the West Bank. It would be thoroughly irresponsible for Israel to dismiss these public statements and not consider how Iran would execute this plan. How would they resupply their forces? Which states would they need to cross? Jordan would figure prominently in Iranian calculations.<sup>11</sup>

When Iran decided to build up its ground presence in Syria, it invested in building logistics capabilities there, including depots, warehouses, and weapons factories. Shiite religious sites also figured prominently in its calculations. This had been the pattern followed by the Iranians in their quest to dominate Iraq. In Syria, the Iranians focused particularly on the Zeinab shrine in the southern suburbs of Damascus, named after the sister of Hussein and daughter of Ali, whom the Shiites argued should have become the successor to Muhammad (he was selected to be the fourth caliph). The shrine of Zeinab has been protected by a contingent of Iranian Revolutionary Guards.<sup>12</sup>

## Muslim Holy Sites in Southern Jordan Revered by Iran



In southern Jordan, there are a number of shrines memorializing the Companions of Muhammad, like Ja'far bin 'Abi Talib, the brother of Ali, Zeid bin Haretha, and Abdullah bin Rawaha. They were all killed in the Battle of Mu'tah (also located in what is today Jordan), where an Arab Muslim army had one of its first military engagements with the Byzantine Empire as it sought to break out of the Arabian Peninsula. Those who died in the Battle of Mu'tah came to be known as martyrs; their burial sites became places of pilgrimage.

In July 2014, according to the *Jordan Times*, 1,919 Arabs and Muslims visited the shrines of the Prophet Muhammad's Companions in the southern Mazar District in Kerak. There were over 30,000 people visiting the shrines in the course of 2014.

These shrines are held in high regard in both the Sunni and Shiite traditions. For some, they served as a place of pilgrimage when Iranians lost their access to Iraqi shrines during the Iran-Iraq War. In the last number of years, Iran has sought to upgrade Iranian access to these sites by promising Jordan energy supplies in exchange. Tehran offered to provide Jordan's oil needs for 30 years. Iranian officials turned to Jordan five times in 2014 alone. The Jordanians denied all the Iranian requests,<sup>13</sup> no doubt wary of Iran increasing its foothold. Jordan's border with Israel is the longest border Israel shares with its neighbors, making it very sensitive to what transpires in the Hashemite Kingdom.

As the prospects of a Russian withdrawal from Syria in 2022 increased with the escalation of the conflict in Ukraine, Jordanian concerns with Iran filling the vacuum that Moscow would leave behind, correspondingly grew. Jordan also had to deal with an expanding presence of pro-Iranian groups to its south in the Red Sea. In the meantime, King Abdullah disclosed on *CNN* during July 2021 that Iranian drones had attacked Jordan in increasing numbers.

## The Nature of Current Threats to Israel and Their Implications for Israel's Security Needs

### 1. Iran and *Jihadi* Terror Armies

Iran has used Lebanon and its Hizbullah forces as a laboratory for developing the new challenge to Israel. The best description of this force is to call it a terror army or hybrid forces, based on using both the tactics of terrorist organizations and much of the equipment of a regular army. Hizbullah is a terrorist organization, but it also operates in conventional military formations. ISIS employed seized American armaments in Iraq, including M1, A1, Abrams tanks. *Jihadi* organizations in Syria seized advanced Russian weaponry as well. Indeed, in 2015, reports began appearing that Moscow sent its most advanced tanks, the T-90, to Syria.<sup>14</sup> The Russian tanks were either seized or destroyed by the Syrian *jihadis*.



*Jihadists demonstrate capability to subdue Syrian conventional units. Pictured here is a captured Syrian T-72V-AT tank (with reactive armor) flying the Jabhatal-Nusra flag.*



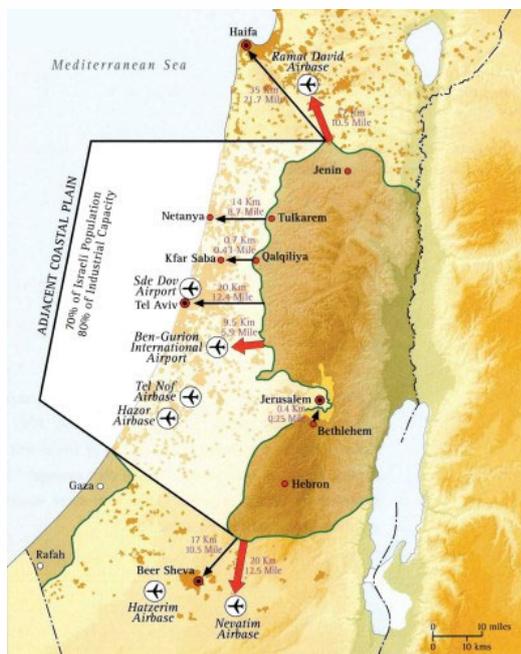
*Syrian rebel fighters fire from the captured Russian T-90 tank from their position in the countryside of Idlib towards government forces positions on February 16, 2020. (Omar Haj Kadour/AFP via Getty Images)*



*Jihadists demonstrate capability to subdue Syrian conventional units. Pictured here is a captured Syrian T-90 tank.*

The fleet of ISIS armor grew especially after the Iraqi Security Forces withdrew from their strongholds, like Ramadi, and ISIS advanced. These tanks have also been known to have fallen into the hands of Iranian-backed militias as well. Skeptics about Israel’s need for defensible borders often recall the massive formations that Iraq used to deploy in Arab-Israeli wars but that no longer exist. But terror armies demonstrated their proficiency even during the Arab Spring, at times defeating conventional military formations.

## Israel’s Strategic Vulnerability from the West Bank



It is not surprising, therefore, that when former IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. (res.) Gadi Eisenkot wrote *Guidelines for Israel’s National Security Strategy* in September 2019 (along with Gabi Saboni), he included “defensible borders” among the seven principles for the military security of Israel. He explained that the map of threats to Israel actually “elevates the importance of territory” in the present era. As a result, he

determines that any peace arrangement must assure that “Israel will exercise by itself absolute control over its present strategic envelope, including the Jordan Valley.”

*The map of threats to Israel actually “elevates the importance of territory” in the present era.*  
 – Former IDF Chief of Staff Lt.-Gen. (res.) Gadi Eisenkot

Implicit in his analysis was the point that in the Gaza Strip, Israel lost control over the “strategic envelope,” leading to a massive arms build-up there and the eventual outbreak of a succession of Israeli-Hamas wars. Eisenkot essentially warned that Israel should not allow the same process to take place in the hills of Judea and Samaria. It is vital to recall that the Israeli territory adjacent to the West Bank contains some 70 percent of Israel’s population and 80 percent of its industrial capacity.<sup>15</sup>

Those who come to Israel with new suggestions often err in that their model of security is scenario-specific. It starts with the view that the era of the classic conventional battlefield is finished, not taking into account that states can revive their capabilities over the years.

## 2. Drone Warfare and New Technology

There are new technologies emerging that are already being supplied to terrorist organizations and they require Israel to continue to be cautious. For example, the combat drone has proven its ability to alter the battlefield in recent years, giving renewed power to states that did not have advanced air forces. The Royal Saudi Air Force has been armed with the most advanced Western aircraft. The Houthis, who were a backward, rural organization, demonstrated their ability to master advanced technology. Using Iranian attack drones, they have successfully struck at the Saudi capital, Riyadh, and at some of the most important parts of Saudi Arabia’s oil infrastructure. The Houthis, with Iranian backing, managed to “level the playing field” with Saudi Arabia.

### Houthi Drones Strike at Saudi Oil Infrastructure



*Fires burn in the distance after a drone strike by Yemen's Iran-aligned Houthi group on Saudi company Aramco's oil processing facilities in Abqaiq, Saudi Arabia, September 14, 2019. (Social media screenshot)*

## Strategic Reach of Houthi Drone Strikes



Drones helped Azerbaijan defeat Armenia, which had been the victorious party in previous conflicts between them. Ground-based radar remains vital for detecting low-flying air platforms like drones, which are proliferating throughout the Middle East. Effective air defense requires a combination of air-based and ground-based early-warning systems in order to assure around the clock detection of attacking air platforms under all weather conditions. As already noted, Israel has used the mountain ridge of Judea and Samaria for that purpose. Defensible borders thus have a new relevance in this conflict as well.

### 3. Airpower vs. Ground Forces

Another common assumption among Western defense commentators is that airpower is everything. The victories by the West in Kosovo, Iraq, and elsewhere has led some to conclude that any threat can be defeated with airpower. The airpower enthusiasts forget that the critical factor that Israel must neutralize is the enemy's ability to win decisively, meaning decisively defeating the enemy on the ground.<sup>16</sup>

That was the message that appeared in the writings of Yigal Allon and it remains true to this day.

### 4. Tunnel Warfare

Since the 2014 Gaza conflict, known as Operation Protective Edge, the role of tunnels in modern warfare has become more pronounced. Originally, Hamas used tunnels from Egyptian Sinai to the Gaza Strip in order to maintain lines of supply of smuggled weapons to its forces. Tunnels then came to be used to help Hamas penetrate Israel's southern border for operational purposes, including attacks. Hizbullah followed

the same pattern in order to penetrate Northern Israel. Defensible borders remained relevant as this threat grew, for they defined the distances that terror organizations would have to dig and whether their tunnels were feasible.



*Smuggling tunnel in Rafah, 2009 (Marius Arnesen/Flickr/CC BY-SA 3.0 NO)*

## Pushing Back on Western-Crafted Alternatives to Defensible Borders

In 2014, former IDF Chief of Staff Moshe Ya'alon took part in a study entitled *Israel's Critical Requirements for Defensible Borders*, published by the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs. Ya'alon authored the introduction to the publication, in which he explained why he was involved in this project: "This study is a corrective to the widely-held view in many international quarters and even in limited circles in Israel about the "need" and even the "inevitability" that peace requires Israel to withdraw to the perilous 1949 armistice lines (erroneously called the "1967 borders"). The previous year, Ya'alon had been part of the Israeli team working with Secretary of State John Kerry, who had been advocating new Israeli concessions in the West Bank and the emplacement of alternative forms of security for Israel, which troubled many in the Israeli defense establishment. An article in the *Washington Post* captured the issues of primary concern in the security discussions at the time:

A generation of Israeli generals had considered the Jordan Valley a crucial eastern flank against a land invasion of the Jewish state from the east. But where they once worried about columns of Iraqi tanks, they are now more concerned about asymmetrical warfare from terror groups seeking to infiltrate the West Bank and use it as a platform of attack.<sup>17</sup>

So does Israel need to be as concerned with its eastern front today as it was in the past? The answer is absolutely yes, even if aspects of the military threat have changed. First, the stability of all the neighboring countries was put into question with the outbreak of the Arab Spring in 2011. Jordan survived, but a new situation

emerged in which Iran has exploited the vacuum in the Arab world to project its military power westward. Second, while Israel has demonstrated the prowess of its air force in the skies of Syria as it took out Iranian facilities that were closing in on its borders, Israeli senior officers correctly maintain their belief that when Israel is under attack, wars can only be won by the movement of ground forces.

It would be an error for Israel to join the chorus in the West that subscribes to the thesis that airpower can replace the need for ground forces.

As long as ground forces remain the decisive component in Israel's national security strategy, then terrain, topography, and strategic depth have not lost their relevance. They have always been – and still remain – critical components that Israel needs for defensible borders.

Finally, there has been an unfortunate tendency to try to separate security from sovereignty in proposing what Israel should do with the disputed territories. There is a school of thought among Western experts who write about retaining Israeli security positions on the soil of former adversaries instead of dividing the territory and insisting that Israel retain sovereignty only where it has security needs.

This was the original logic of Israeli proposals for territorial compromise in the Allon Plan. In fact, when Yigal Allon originally proposed his idea to the Israeli Cabinet on July 26, 1967, he stated: “In order to assure a strong defensive deployment and the strategic integrity of Israel,” *territories “will be joined to Israel as an integral part of the state”* (emphasis added). In Allon's view, security required the incorporation of strategically vital territories into Israel in any permanent status arrangement for a final stable peace.

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Ambassador **Dore Gold** has served as President of the Jerusalem Center for Public Affairs since 2000. From June 2015 until October 2016 he served as Director-General of the Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Previously he served as Foreign Policy Advisor to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel's Ambassador to the UN (1997-1999), and as an advisor to Prime Minister Ariel Sharon.

Brig.-Gen. (res.) **Yossi Kuperwasser** is Director of the Project on Regional Middle East Developments at the Jerusalem Center. He was formerly Director General of the Israel Ministry of Strategic Affairs and head of the Research Division of IDF Military Intelligence.

# How Russia's war is undoing 30 years of Jewish community building in Ukraine

By Cnaan Liphshiz



*Rabbi Shaul Horowitz, right, meets a Jewish refugee attending service at the synagogue of Vinnytsia, Ukraine in June 2022. (Courtesy of Shaul Horowitz)*

VINNYTSIA, Ukraine (JTA) — At this city's only regularly functioning synagogue, nine men and five women cheer a visitor on as he enters the building. "Terrific! We have a 10th! Let's begin!" one of the men, David Goldish, exclaimed during this interaction on a recent Shabbat.

The struggle to gather 10 Jewish men to form a prayer quorum known as a minyan is part of life for many small Jewish communities in Europe.

But it used to be a distant memory in Vinnytsia, one of multiple Ukrainian cities where decades of community-building had restored Jewish communal life after communism. Dozens of Jews would gather for Shabbat services at each of the three synagogues of this city, which had about 3,000 Jews when war broke out.

Yet Russia's invasion of Ukraine in February has compelled many thousands of Jews, and especially young Jewish families and singles, to join the millions of non-Jewish Ukrainians who have fled at-risk areas, and the country altogether.

By far the greatest threat to those who remain is from Russian attacks, which are unrelenting as the Russian army steps up its offensive. But already, local Jewish leaders in cities across Ukraine have begun to assess the toll on their communities' strength — and are arriving at disquieting conclusions.

"It feels like we've gone back in time to 30 years ago because the pillars of the community have pretty much all gone out of Ukraine," Rabbi Shaul Horowitz, the Chabad-Lubavitch movement's emissary to Vinnytsia, told the Jewish Telegraphic Agency. "The wheel rolled back. We need to rebuild it all. Back to square one."

Horowitz was referring to what happened in 1991, when the Soviet Union fell and Ukraine became independent. Jews from across the former Soviet Union who had been prevented from leaving fled out of the region — 1.6 million in total over more than a decade, mostly to Israel. Since Jewish education had been prohibited, few who remained had fluency in Jewish prayers or practice. But over the last three decades, a range of efforts, many fueled by Chabad, have introduced Ukrainian Jews to Judaism and built thriving communities in cities across the country. Now, the conflict seems to have undone some of the revival enjoyed by Ukrainian Jewry, a minority whose prewar size was estimated to be at least 47,000.



*Men pray at a synagogue in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, June 24, 2022. (Cnaan Liphshiz)*

In Vinnytsia, Horowitz estimated, half of local Jews are gone. His congregation gathers at a small synagogue that is accessible through a back alley that requires members to walk past a ramshackle car repair shop and apartment courtyards filled where chickens roam.

On a recent Friday evening, the congregants preferred to wait outside the synagogue in the fresh air to the alternative of staying inside the dark and poorly ventilated interior, filled with the smells of cooking cabbage, fried fish and cholent, the traditional bean and meat stew that many Jews consume on Shabbat. The food, which is served with vodka after prayer and is a staple tradition in some synagogues in this part of the world, seemed to account for at least some of the event's appeal for some elderly participants, who left immediately after consuming large portions of it.

"Most of the people who could leave — have already left," said Mikhail Krilyuk, a 35-year-old single man who owns a local exporting business.

"Those who had money, a passport, an SUV to travel to the border, they packed up and left. That's the kind of people who held this community together," said Krilyuk, who decided to stay, in keeping with rules prohibiting men under 60 from leaving the country in case they are needed to fight.

The residents of Vinnytsia seemed to feel safe, ignoring the sirens blaring frequently last month. "Oh, the alarms? Don't worry about them," one Vinnytsian, Oksana Politova, told a concerned reporter at one of Vinnytsia's riverside cafés during

one such incident. “It’s a national alert system so the rockets could be falling anywhere. And sometimes it’s just a false alarm.”

But on July 14, a Russian rocket did hit Vinnytsia – the second such incident during the war. It killed 23 people near an iconic statue of a fighter jet at the center of the city located about 100 miles southwest of Kyiv.



*A heavily damaged office building and the monument to the military jet in Vinnytsia, Ukraine, after the Russian bombing there, July 14, 2022. (Alexey Furman/Getty Images)*

“It just proves what I’ve been telling local Jews since war broke out: Nowhere in Ukraine is safe, they need to get out,” said Koen Carlier, a Belgian national who has been living for over a decade in Vinnitsia, where he and his wife Ira run the Ukraine office of Christians for Israel, a group that helps Jews immigrate to Israel.

Local Jews were not expecting the assault on a placid and relatively affluent city that doesn’t have any great strategic significance for Russia.

“Despite that attack, the Jews here largely stayed put. They have nowhere else to go,” Horowitz, 44, told JTA. “But it shocked all of us. It made the community panic.” None of the city’s Jews were hurt in the attack, but two, including the community’s driver, Simha Haim, were traumatized by it.

For the past decade, Horowitz has focused on gathering the region’s Jews into a community. Now he is encouraging and helping anyone from his flock who is able to leave the country to do so.

A frequent target of Russian attacks, Kyiv’s Jewish community is also seeing the war roll back much of the progress reached there since the fall of communism.

Before the war, the city had one of Eastern Europe’s few large non-Orthodox Jewish communities: the Hatikvah congregation, with about 500 families. Fully half have left, according to Hatikvah’s rabbi, Alexander Dukhovny.

“Pensioners, people with disabilities — they are still here. But many of the young families with the possibility to leave have left to different destinations,” he said.

Dukhovny believes some will return. He saw some people who fled in the war’s early days at a recent Kabbalat Shabbat, a Friday night service, which his community had suspended due to Russian attacks and only recently resumed in a sign of return to normalcy that the congregation “celebrates with a lot of joy,” he said.

But many thousands likely won’t be returning – especially among the approximately 12,000 who had left for Israel under its Law of Return for Jews and their relatives in the first half of 2022 alone. (The figure for the whole of 2021 was 3,129.) Ukrainian Jewry has managed to flourish despite multiple crises, including the 2014 Russian annexation of Crimea and the 2005 Orange Revolution and the political and financial instability it brought.

In addition to dozens of synagogues, mikvahs, Jewish schools and kindergartens that have all been opened in the past 30 years, Ukrainian Jewry boasts institutions so large and conspicuous that they have become symbols of its presumed robustness.

First and foremost among those flashy embassies for Jewish life in Ukraine is the Menorah complex in Dnipro, an eastern city that has been on the receiving end of multiple Russian assaults.

Built by the Chabad movement in the city where its last leader lived as a child, the \$100 million Jewish community center includes event halls, a synagogue, spa-like mikvahs, several kosher restaurants and, until recently, local branches of Israeli banks for dual nationals.

It towers over the skyline of the city, which before the war had at least 10,000 Jews, with its 22 stories that comprise a giant menorah. It’s said to be the largest Jewish community center in Europe, all built with monies from Ukrainian-Jewish oligarchs, including Igor Kolomoisky.



*The Menorah Center in Dnipro, Ukraine, is said to be the largest Jewish community center in Europe. (Jewish Community of Dnipro)*

Life hasn’t changed much at Menorah and for Dnipro Jews following the war, according to Oleg Rostovchev, a spokesperson for the Dnipro Jewish Community. “Some have left but there are still thousands of Jews here,” he told JTA.

But a member of the community who spoke to the Jewish Telegraphic Agency anonymously, citing possible negative implications for giving out “non-official information,” as the source termed it, said that about half of Dnipro’s Jews have left. “Or maybe it just feels like that because the ones who live half in Israel and half here stopped coming,” the source said. In Odessa, another major center of Ukrainian Jewry, at least half of the Jews have left, according to several locals. And in Kharkiv, another former hub of Judaism in Ukraine that has come under intense bombardment, hardly any remain at all, according to Moshe Moskovitz, the city’s Chabad rabbi. In some places west of Kyiv, internal displacement of Jews is counteracting departures from the ranks of local Jewish communities.

Sergey Poliakov is one of the Jewish refugees staying in Vinnytsia. An employee of the Roshen chocolate factory from Kherson, he and his fiancée fled to Vinnytsia when their city came under Russian attack. They are now staying at Vinnytsia’s only Jewish school – a mansion-sized Soviet-era building in the city’s outskirts whose new, modern-looking mikvah contrasts sharply with the building’s overall crumbling appearance.

The fact that it exists at all is remarkable, Horowitz noted.

“This city under communism had one synagogue that the authorities kept open for propaganda purposes. It was in the market and just to make sure nobody goes in, there was a KGB outpost overlooking the synagogue. Anyone who went in was documented,” Horowitz said. During the Soviet era, many Jews who demonstrated a desire to worship publicly or belong to a Jewish community were persecuted, often for engaging in Zionist activities, which were banned. Some courageous local Jews entered anyway, sometimes using a secret entrance while pretending to shop, he said.

The seven families now living at the school compound, including some non-Jewish ones, all came from further east. They pick cherries and pears for kompot — a chilled fruit soup that is a staple summer food — from the many trees that dot the compound, and they planted potatoes in a former playground. On a recent Saturday evening, a non-Jewish family playfully coaxed Poliakov to taste some chicken they had barbecued for a birthday party of one of the family’s members, a 44-year-old woman named Dora. “It’s kosher as can be, I assure you!” said Dora, who was on her fourth shot of vodka. “Yes, I’m sure but I’ll stick to the booze,” Poliakov replied, smiling. Poliakov, 33, said he doesn’t know whether his flat in Kherson, which he recently bought with his life savings, “is even still standing or whether it’s a heap of rubble,” he said. “All my neighbors also left so there’s no one to check. It’s a ghost town. I’m working under the assumption that I have nowhere to return.”

With that in mind, Poliakov, an observant Jew with a high-earning job, may well settle down in Vinnytsia, one of Ukraine’s richest cities with a population of

370,000 and infrastructure matched by few others of its size. Or he may make aliyah, the term for immigrating to Israel, he said.



*Israeli officials, including Aliyah and Integration Minister Pnina Tamano-Shata, center, greet refugees from Ukraine as they arrive at Israel’s Ben-Gurion Airport, March 6, 2022. (Mucahit Aydemir/Anadolu Agency via Getty Images)*

Poliakov is among the people who are considered pillars of their communities who left because of the war. There are many like him, according to Eduard Dolinsky, the director of the Ukrainian Jewish Committee, one of several groups representing Ukrainian Jewry.

It’s too early to talk statistics amid the fog of war, Dolinsky said, but he estimates that war-related emigration is especially high among a category of Jews he considers “pillars of the community – people who go to synagogue every week and care about being Jewish,” he said.

For such Jews, years of community-building around Israel, Hebrew and Judaism may have helped build relationships outside of Ukraine, including in Israel, that facilitated fleeing in the hectic early weeks of the war, when many around the world sought to support Ukrainians.

But many of those who left were not actively engaged in Jewish life in Ukraine, according to Vyacheslav Likhachev, a spokesperson for the Vaad Ukrainian-Jewish group and a historian who has researched social issues relevant to Ukrainian Jewry.

“Most Ukrainian Jews are secular. Their attachment to the community, to the degree that it exists, is cultural or through receiving aid from the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, not through Chabad and the rabbis who engage with a small percent of the Jewish minority,” said Likhachev.

So why did so many Ukrainian Jews leave for Israel during the war?

“Because they could and because in Israel, almost all of them have friends or family,” Likhachev said, adding that because hundreds of thousands of people from Ukrainian territory made aliyah in the 1990s, “Most of Ukrainian Jewry is already in Israel.” How many of them remain is the issue of some disagreement.

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Chabad says there were about 250,000 people who are Jewish according to halacha, traditional Jewish law, in Ukraine before the war with Russia. The European Jewish Congress, based on data from local Jewish groups, says up to 360,000. And the Institute for Jewish Policy Research in a 2020 demographics report estimated that there were about 47,000 people who self-identify as Jews that year in Ukraine. Whatever the number, Ukraine's small congregations are being hit especially hard by the effects of the war, Dolinsky said.

"In a synagogue where you had 50 people coming to synagogue every week, 10 have remained," Dolinsky said. "It means the smaller communities will disappear."

In Uzhgorod, a city on the border with Hungary, the war has led to an influx of Jews – people from further east who came to Uzhgorod for safety.

"The synagogue is busier than ever and so are we," said Sarah Wilhelm, the wife of Rabbi Mendel Wilhelm, the Chabad movement's emissary to Uzhgorod, where a few hundred Jews live. But the war "has made everyone poorer and sadder," she said. Dolinsky is pessimistic that communities will ultimately be shored up by Jews who move there from elsewhere in Ukraine.

"The Jewish people who fled from the east to more western cities will not remain there. They are moving forward. They're moving to a new life in Europe," said Dolinsky, 52, who during the war moved from Kyiv to the western city of Lutsk. He and his wife Oksana now divide their time between those two cities.

He said the consequences of the war on Ukrainian Jewry will go far beyond demographics. The ensuing financial crisis has ruined the local currency, the hryvnia, and much of the local economy. That means that oligarchs like Kolomoisky or Victor Pinchuk will likely have less money to invest in rebuilding Ukrainian Jewry, he said. Meanwhile, while Jews from around the world donated to support Soviet Jewry 30 years ago, collecting the money abroad could be difficult this time around amid what is shaping up to be a new global financial crisis, Dolinsky added.

"It's much worse than anything we've seen," Dolinsky said. "It's absolutely a disaster unlike any other in my lifetime at least."

JULY 20, 2022, JTA

## Poetic Labyrinth of Isaac Cohen

By Ana Stjelja

Poetry by contemporary Israeli poet Isaac Cohen is marked by intertwining traces of past and present, with a reminiscence of mythology and tradition. It is also a reflection of his sincere thoughts about love and life shaped by his creative poetic inspiration. At times, his imagination takes him far from his homeland, although he only finds spiritual completion in "Jerusalem of Peace". His inner poetic voice is led by his muse that takes him to the very source of poetry where his thirsty soul can drink from. His poetic language is simple but alluring. His poems convey some important messages that should help the world become a better place. He inherited the talent for writing from his mother who used to write folk stories and this apparently made a significant impact on his writing. Reading his poems, a reader walks through a poetic labyrinth of Isaac Cohen. Sometimes he gets lost between words and letters, sometimes he hides there wishing to stay for some time. His poetry is advocating for love, peace and honesty, true values of life that all of us should strive for.

### The Muses' Songs

*Behold I close my eyes  
I walk in the field of flowers and nymphs.  
Behold in the white path  
Pure muses find out secrets in my labyrinths  
brain.  
Behold, the muses sing  
and with wires connect  
the flowing voices of  
the beautiful sites of Mexico.  
My heart joyful at the  
sites of the pictures.  
Come out until  
the Capital of Israel:  
"Jerusalem of peace".*



Isaac Cohen



# The Immortal Salman Rushdie

By Bernard-Henri Lévy

His friends, his readers, and Salman Rushdie himself eventually stopped thinking about the fatwa. He was living an almost normal life in New York. For decades, he had had no more than a very discreet, nearly invisible security detail.

I recall the day, shortly after the French presidential election in 2017, that Emmanuel Macron invited Salman and me for coffee at the Élysée Palace in Paris. He was astonished that Salman had so little protection. “I’m not the martyr type,” Salman joked. “I’m just a writer. Why would anyone hold such a big grudge against a writer?”

Well, he was wrong. This kind of killer never lets up. You can despise them, you can push them out of your mind—the bounty hunters and lunatics that history sets on your tracks—but the pack never forgets about you.

And that is what my friend Salman may have grasped, in the bewildering seconds of [Friday’s attack](#) when a man invaded the stage at the Chautauqua Institution and started stabbing him. I was reminded of the fate of those other victims of fanaticism, Samuel Paty, Father Jacques Hamel, and Daniel Pearl, when I learned that Salman’s would-be assassin had slashed at his neck. He was left fighting for his life, gravely injured, though at least now off a ventilator.

A wave of terror and horror is breaking over us all. I don’t have the heart to do much besides wait for news to trickle out from the hospital in Pennsylvania where Salman was taken by helicopter and let the memories come back to me—my memories of Salman Rushdie over the 33 years that have passed since Ayatollah Khomeini publicly sentenced him to death.

I recall a meeting of the Nordic Council in Helsinki, three years after the fatwa, when I decided to share my speaking time with Salman. We gave no advance notice, and only my friend the Swedish author Gabi Gleichmann was party to our plan. When Salman took the stage with me, the audience held its breath—as though before it was a ghost, or a man condemned to death reprieved at the 11th hour, another “man in the iron mask” on the loose from his planetary Bastille.

Then he began to speak, smiling and with a twinkle in those strange, half-moon eyes of his, with their prominent pupils that eclipse the whites. He improvised a dazzling monologue on art and the power of the novel, saying that between his work and his life, he would always choose his work. He received a standing ovation.

Then there was a private trip to Nice, in the mid-1990s. Air Inter blocked off the first row. As I recall, he boarded at the last minute with his security detail, just before the doors closed, after we had witnessed a

mysterious ballet of police, service vehicles, and flashing lights on the runway. On this occasion, too, when he appeared on the plane, there was generalized shock. One woman claimed that she was ill. Another woman demanded to be let off the plane. The rest of the passengers, once the initial surprise wore off, broke into sustained applause.

Another cowardly soul comes to mind. This one was once France’s foreign minister, Roland Dumas. *La Règle du jeu*, a literary magazine that Salman and I and some others founded in 1990, invited Salman to come to France to meet up with some of his Parisian friends. As I remember, the minister behaved shamefully, decreeing that Salman, a citizen of Europe, needed a visa to enter France. Then he denied the visa on the grounds that he couldn’t guarantee Salman’s security. Dumas’s own colleague, Minister of Culture Jack Lang, protested. My friend the businessman François Pinault offered to lend us a plane and to provide the necessary protection. President François Mitterrand himself had to settle the matter. And lo, the France that was hoping for trade deals and arms sales [yielded](#) to the spirit of Voltaire. *Bienvenue, Monsieur Salman*.

Yet another spineless individual: Prince Charles. In 1993, I met him at a lunch hosted by the British embassy in Paris. “Salman is not a good writer,” growled the prince when I asked him what he thought of the whole affair, adding that “protecting him costs England’s crown dearly.” On this, Martin Amis, another of Salman’s friends, [later remarked](#): “It costs a lot more to protect the Prince of Wales, who has not, as far as I know, produced anything of interest.” The press and public opinion, for once, took the side of the persecuted writer.

*Le Monde* sent me to London in 1998 to [report on](#) the daily life of the world’s most reclusive writer. After lunch at Scott’s, we strolled through Mayfair. We passed Kensington Palace, to which Salman had rushed, as many Londoners did in the days after Princess Diana died, the previous year. We visited the National Portrait Gallery to see an exhibition of portraits by the photographer Henri Cartier-Bresson. People approached my companion: “Are you Salman Rushdie?” (“I hope so; I do my best,” he said.) He made it a point of honor, on that day, to act as if he did not have the sword of Damocles hanging over his head. He exercised his freedom, his normal life, the way others exercise to stay in shape. Upon my departure, alas, he returned to his prison without walls.

I remember the trip to Sarajevo we planned in 1993. Bosnia’s president, Alija Izetbegović, welcomed the visit in principle. Salman wanted to go. Far from being the Islamophobe the lowest of his critics make him out to be, he is a friend and ally of moderate Islam. Was he not the defender of a Quran that fights on the side of enlightenment, as were those defending Sarajevo? But a certain Boutros Boutros-Ghali, then the secretary-general of the United Nations (before falling, deservedly, into the dustbin of history),

opposed the trip on spurious pretexts. We had to abandon the plan.

I remember a conversation we had in front of an audience in London, where Salman said how much he missed the Islam of his childhood in India. “The greatest of Muslim thought has been broad-minded,” he explained. “When I think back to my grandparents’ time, my parents’ time, Islam strove to be cosmopolitan. It raised questions and engaged in argument. It was *alive*.” Salman is the son of that form of Islam. He obviously has nothing against blasphemy, because blasphemy, in his eyes, is inseparable from freedom of expression and thought; but neither do I believe that he has ever blasphemed against the creed of his parents.

I remember a conversation between us, in Paris, on the Jewish radio station RCJ, when he speculated on what the fatwa would have entailed if it had been issued in the era not of the fax machine but of social media. “A tweet is all it takes,” he said, as I recall, “to stir up the planet. Five minutes on YouTube is enough to trigger simultaneous demonstrations throughout the world. If my fatwa had occurred in the internet age, would it have been fatal? I don’t know.” Now he knows. Alas.

I remember his wedding to Padma Lakshmi, in 2004: the shower of rose petals, the Indian orchestra, sitars and drums, the act of slipping an amulet onto the ankle of his beloved, his friends and son in attendance. He was happy.

I remember the night of Barack Obama’s first presidential election. We were at a party in a paneled New York apartment with a mix of literary types, actors, journalists, campaign donors, and philanthropists. A cellphone rang. It was the president-elect calling to thank Salman personally for his support.

I remember the day the French historian Pierre Nora; Claude Lanzmann, the director of *Shoah*; and I came to interview Salman for a [1994 documentary](#) for the European cultural TV channel Arte. We filmed the conversation, if I remember correctly, in the library of a club in an upscale London neighborhood. Lanzmann was annoyed by Salman’s air of authority. Nora was annoyed by the annoyance of his old-school friend. He wanted to protect Lanzmann from himself and his well-known tendency to rehash old quarrels. Salman enjoyed the show they put on. He liked the idea that these old-timers, whom he admired, seemed to fall back into an unresolved adolescent conversation.

I remember a day on the beach in Antibes, the pleasure of being alive, the noon sun, heat waves rippling as far as you could see, sharing a love of movies and actresses, especially Jean-Luc Godard’s *Contempt*, the real owner of the Casa Malaparte in Capri (which Godard used as his film’s main setting). That day, Salman wanted nothing so much as to be able one day to do a remake of *Dr. No* or *From Russia With Love*. The good life. An appetite for living and for multiplying the ways of living. The opposite of a condemned man.

I mull over our dinners together in New York in recent years. He didn’t want to hear any more about the fatwa. We talked about François Rabelais, Toni Morrison’s *Song of Solomon*, Laurence Sterne, George Eliot (a writer he could never get into), and V. S. Naipaul, whose death had devastated him. Literature before and above all else! The wish, faced with the fracas of the world, to say, “Please, turn down the sound!” Which obviously did not prevent him, a few months ago, at the very beginning of the war in Ukraine, from deciding that it was urgent for us to pen an appeal for sanctions against Russia and to help persuade Sting and Sean Penn to join the campaign.

What has struck me, over all these years, is the quiet heroism of my friend. He understood very well that, from time to time, a Western government [would expel](#) a fake Iranian diplomat and that this might be out of concern for his safety because of the fatwa. He knew that self-styled friends of the Muslim people were still insisting, despite the [Charlie Hebdo massacre](#) and other slaughters, that no one had the right to offend others’ faith and that, if harm should befall the offender, he had only himself to blame. And never did a speaking engagement go by without his being asked the eternal question: Knowing everything he knew today, did he ever regret having written *The Satanic Verses*, a work that has followed him like a curse?

But was he afraid? No, he was not. At most, he would confess to having a radar that sometimes warned him of possible danger.

And once—just once, a long time ago—I heard him make an odd remark about the knack master killers have for ruminating on their vengeance and carrying it out coldly when least expected. Think Mussolini and the Rosselli brothers; Stalin and Ignace Reiss; Putin and the poisoned oligarchs. And one day, a Shiite Ramón Mercader whom no one would see coming. I believe that is where things stood, last Friday at the Chautauqua Institution, when Salman Rushdie saw the man who meant to execute him leap onto the stage. Will this still be where things stand when he emerges from the hell of pain in which I imagine him? The artist in him will continue to believe that life is a tragedy, a tale full of sound and fury, told by an idiot. And he will not be surprised to hear friends tell him that if one can be Dickens, Balzac, and Tagore in a single life, one could well be considered immortal. But he will read the article in *Iran*, the semi-official newspaper of the regime, which, while he was fighting death, rejoiced that “the devil’s neck” was “struck with a razor.” He will see the ultraconservative newspaper *Kayhan* pronouncing a blessing, while he was recovering, on “the hand of the man who tore the neck of the enemy of God with a knife.”

And Salman will have to get used to the idea, one that always petrified him, of being a human symbol, a hostage in a war of the worlds in which, like it or not, his own life and death have become everybody’s

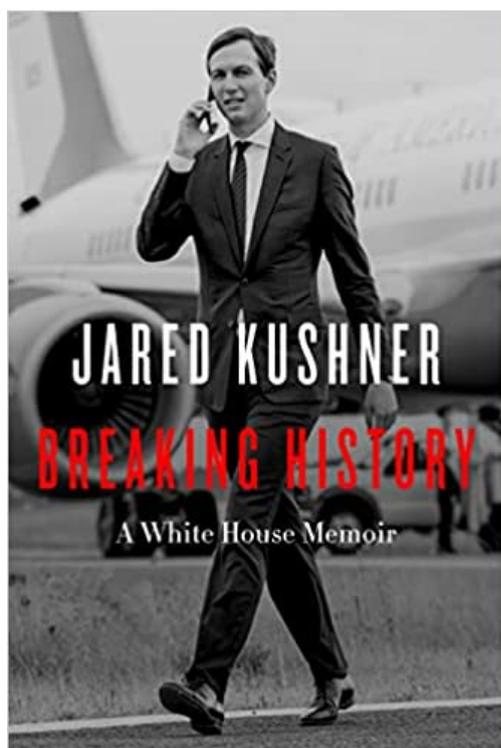
business. That is why those of us who could not protect him—all of us—now have a duty to perform. This act of terror against his body and his books is an absolute act of terror against all the world's books. Such an outrage against freedom of expression calls for a ringing response.

Individual nations will have their say. The international community, too, must signal to the sponsors of this crime that *this* Salman Rushdie affair has created a new division, a time before and a time after.

As for his friends, his peers, media, and others for whom public opinion counts for something, we all have a commitment to make. And that is to ensure that the author of *The Satanic Verses* receives the highest of literary honors. To see that, in the name of all his fellow authors and in his own name, Salman Rushdie receives the Nobel Prize in Literature that is due to be awarded in a few weeks.

I cannot imagine any other writer today would wish to win it in his stead. The campaign begins now.

*The Atlantic*



*Jared Kushner was one of the most consequential presidential advisers in modern history. For the first time, he recounts what happened behind closed doors during the Trump presidency.*

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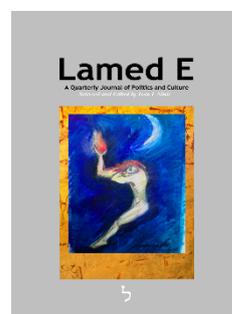
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